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Redevelopment Board Minutes 03/14/2011

Minutes of Monday, March 14, 2011
Arlington Redevelopment Board
2nd Floor Conference Room, Town Hall Annex
Approved : April 4, 2011

Members Present:
Michael Cayer
Ted Fields
Bruce Fitzsimmons
Chris Loreti, Chairman
Andrew West

Also present were members of the public.

Mr. Loreti opened the meeting at 7:00pm.
The Board opened the required public hearing on the zoning bylaw amendment warrant articles. Mr. Loreti asked the public to indicate the articles on which they had questions or comments for the Board, and noted the response.

The Board first heard comments on Article 17. Stephen Harrington, 74 Columbia Road introduced himself as representing the Arlington Athletic Advisory Committee, which is advisory to the School Committee. The Athletic Advisory Committee looks for sources of revenue to offset costs of the athletic program for participants' families. Warrant article 17 would allow advertising at Peirce Field, including the baseball diamond. Mr. Harrington said, and that the advertising would not be seen from the street. He said that a permanent change in the bylaw was needed to allow this. A marketing firm advised the Committee that the signs should all look similar. He showed photo simulations of the signs in place, including 50 banners along fences, concession stands, and light poles. They would be temporary signs for a season or a year. They would not be illuminated, he said. The athletic department and the School Committee would review for appropriateness. Director of Inspectional Services would also inspect the signs to ensure conformance to the bylaw. Jack Crowley, 286 Ridge Street introduced himself, saying this article has the unanimous endorsement of the School Committee to offset high user fees.

The Board discussed adding language for a vote to allow the new signs under the zoning bylaw.

The Board then heard zoning bylaw amendment warrant article 11. Staff explained that last year, Town Meeting adopted new flood insurance rate maps. The language adopted inadvertently weakened another subsection of that bylaw. This pending article would reconcile that internal inconsistency. Conservation Administrator Cori Beckwith stated that the Conservation Commission endorses the proposed amendment.

John Worden, 27 Jason Street asked for clarification on the reference to flood insurance maps and the wetlands map. Ms. Beckwith stated that the floodplain overlay map was updated to reflect new FEMA maps.

The Board then heard article 12, to add specific wetlands areas to the wetlands overlay of the zoning map. Mr. Loreti asked whether Ryder Brook was voted previously and added to the map. Ms. Beckwith replied in the negative.

On Article 7 regarding cemetery use, Mr. Loreti asked Ms. Beckwith's opinion as to whether the Conservation Commission supported the article. She said the conservation commission endorsed the plan. Michelle Hassler introduced herself as a member of the Cemetery Commission. She described a study undertaken by that Commission and the Conservation Commission to allow cremated remains in a restored Cooke's Hollow landscaping plan. The Board asked what other lands are under jurisdiction of the Conservation Commission, and whether all Conservation Commission land is in the Open Space District. Mr. Makowka expressed concern about the approval process under this bylaw change.

Beth Ann Friedman, 10 Hazel Terrace asked if placement of flower bouquets and flags would be prohibited. Ms. Hassler said they would be prohibited. Mr. Worden asked if this work would need a wetlands permit. Ms. Beckwith replied that it would.

Turning to article 8 which would make the Zoning Board of Appeals the special permit granting authority for wireless antennae applications, Mr. Worden asked why the Redevelopment Board would give up their authority. Mr. Fitzsimmons responded that there is insufficient environmental design work done in wireless applications. Mr. Loreti added that after years of experience, the Board and applicants know what the Town expects. Ms. Friedman asked if the Zoning Board of Appeals would have the authority to review the design of wireless installations. Mr. Loreti responded in the affirmative.

Regarding article 9 concerning non-conforming under-sized lots, Mr. Worden asked for clarification, which Mr. Loreti gave.

Regarding the affordable housing articles 13 - 16, Mr. Fitzsimmons asked the Board to continue this part of the hearing to afford the Town Manager the opportunity to present these articles to the Board. The Board discussed the articles and Housing Director Laura Wiener explained the purpose of the articles. Mr. Worden stated that the original goals of the Symmes project committed to 15% affordable units. Mr. Worden recommended that the Board not support article 13. Ms. Friedman stated opposition to articles 13, 14, 15, and 16.

Mr. Fitzsimmons moved that the Board close the hearing with the exception of articles 13, 14, 15, 16, subject to the input of the Town Manager and the public, and that the hearing be continued to March 28 at 7PM. All voted in favor.

The Board then turned to 30-50 Mill Street to consider 50% design review. Tim Williams, Allen & Major, explained the need to leave an existing building wall that is built into the bike path footing. The MBTA would require an easement if the wall was to be removed. The granting of such easement would not be certain or timely. Material samples for the exterior finishes were presented. It was noted that a generator had been added to the plan for a sewer pump since the plumbing for the garage could not gravity-feed. The applicant clarified that the February 27, 2011 plans submitted were superseded; he would provide revised plans showing the change necessitated by leaving the existing building wall intact. Snow would be hauled off-site, Mr. Williams said, responding to an observation that on-site snow storage is no longer shown on the plan.

Mr. Loreti then opened the advertised public hearing for a Special Permit to allow 28 compact parking spaces. Attorney Mary Winstanley O'Connor stated that this change does not affect the arrangement for parking for 22 Mill Street.

After review and discussion, Mr. Cayer moved to accept the reduction in the number of parking spaces to 165 with 28 of the spaces to be sized for compact cars. Mr. Fields seconded and all voted in favor.

Fifty percent design review then resumed. Brian O'Connor, Cube 3 architects stated that due to code restrictions, only four private roof decks and one common roof deck for up to 33 people were now proposed.

The Board then continued the 50% design review to March 28, and asked the applicants for more information on noise control for the generator.

Ms. Kowalski then updated the Board on the Symmes project. The owner and the lender had not yet chosen developers to present to the ARB for its approval. The Board then heard a presentation requested by Mark Comeau and Reed Blute of Pulte Homes of a development concept for the Symmes site. The concept included ninety-seven Town Homes at 1700 to 2400 square feet. Mr. Comeau said that "waivers" would be needed.

After discussion, the Board summarized its concerns, including the issue of variances, skepticism on the absorption of 24 units per year, the total valuation of \$45 million being less than some other developers had proposed that would be more valuable in tax revenue, the proposed residential type potentially straining municipal services, losing the MOB site in Plan B, the proximity of the proposed buildings to the conservation boundary and required site setbacks, compliance with the settlement agreement, compliance with required open space, and the uniformity and generic design and site layout.

Mr. Cayer thanked the Pulte representatives for showing their plan. Mr. West asked for pictures of the proposed unit types, Kingston, Meritt and Chatsworth.

In response to the Symmes Neighborhood Advisory Committee's request to comment, the Chairman noted the full agenda and recommended SNAC request time on the Board's next agenda, which it did.

The Board then turned to the issue of the warrant article on the disposition of 23 Maple Street. After considering information provided on urban renewal properties, Mr. Cayer noted there is a fundamental question of whether the Board of Selectmen or Town Meeting can take a property out of an urban renewal plan. He cautioned that Town Meeting members will ask this, and the Board should have information for Town Meeting. Mr. Loreti reported on his conversation with John Fitzgerald at the MA Dept. of Housing and Community Development. Mr. Fitzgerald said that removing a property from an urban renewal plan required approval of DHCD. DHCD would need to determine if the change is minor or major, and a hearing and public process are required for major changes. Mr. Loreti reported that the urban renewal authority can hold property outside an urban renewal plan, according to Mr. Fitzgerald.

The Board authorized Ms. Kowalski to draft a letter to the Board of Selectmen and Finance Committee, with Mr. Cayer's input, summarizing the issues the Board has identified regarding the disposition of 23 Maple Street.

On motions duly made and seconded, the minutes of the February 7, 2011, February 14, 2011, and February 28 2011 minutes were approved unanimously as amended.

The Chair asked that determining the status of the Symmes Special Permit be placed on the March 28 agenda.

On a motion duly made and seconded, the meeting adjourned at 11pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Carol Kowalski
Secretary ex Officio